

## Handout A-3

### WHY THE JEWS?

Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin

#### THREE MEDIEVAL LIBELS

Throughout the Middle Ages, Christians repeated the accusation in the Gospel of John that the Jews are the Devil's children. Millions of Christians came to believe that the Jews were not actually human beings, but creatures of the Devil, allies of Satan, and personifications of the Antichrist. This diabolical dehumanization of the Jews rendered plausible every accusation against them.

Such was the case regarding the three anti-Jewish libels. . . . Jews murder Christians and drink their blood for ritual purposes; Jews poison Christians; and Jews kidnap the wafer that is transubstantiated into the body of Jesus and torture it by sticking needles into it, thus torturing Jesus.

Each of these three charges was made and believed despite the nonexistence of any supporting evidence except for confessions extracted under torture. But the absence of any evidence fooled few Christians agents of the Devil are notoriously tricky.

#### Ritual Murder

The first accusation of ritual murder was made in 1144 in England. According to a contemporary Christian document: "The Jews of Norwich brought a child before Easter, and tortured him with all the tortures wherewith our Lord was tortured, and on Long Friday hanged him on a rod

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in hatred of our Lord, and afterwards buried him." A Christian convert from Judaism, Theobald of Cambridge, testified that Jews were required to sacrifice a Christian child annually, the choice of place being made at an annual conference of rabbis. This first accusation of ritual murder had no immediate consequences. As no evidence was ever produced that a murder had been committed, let alone a Jewish ritual murder, no Jew was tried for the alleged crime. But the long-term effects of this accusation were to be devastating. Between the twelfth and the twentieth centuries, Jews and often entire Jewish communities were put on trial on over 150 occasions for engaging in ritual murder. In almost every instance Jews were tortured and put to death.

The case of Hugh of Lincoln provides a typical example. In 1255, many Jews visited Lincoln, England, to attend the wedding of a prominent Jew's daughter. The day after the wedding, the body of a Christian boy, Hugh of Lincoln, missing for over three weeks, was found in a cesspool into which he had accidentally fallen. Matthew Paris, a contemporary Christian chronicler, wrote what he and other Christians believed to have really occurred: "The child was first fattened for ten days with white bread and milk, and then . . . almost all the Jews of England were invited to the crucifixion." Subsequently, a Jew named Copin was arrested, and under torture confessed "that the Jews had crucified the boy in the manner that the Jews had once crucified Jesus." One hundred Jews were arrested, and nineteen, including Copin, were hanged without trial.

The case of Hugh of Lincoln had a profound impact on the popular image of Jews in England and throughout the Western world. A century later Geoffrey Chaucer wrote of the Jews' murder of Hugh in "The Prioress's Tale" in his classic *The*

*Canterbury Tales*. In the nineteenth century, one of the leading essayists in England, Charles Lamb, wrote: "I confess that I have not the nerve to enter their synagogues. Old prejudices cling about me. I cannot shake off the story of Hugh of Lincoln." Dozens of ballads were inspired by Hugh's death. The two authors, on a visit to the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas, purchased a book of Ozark Mountain folk songs, printed in 1973, which included a ballad inspired by the "Jewish ritual murder" of Hugh of Lincoln. In it, a Jewish woman is described as inviting a young Christian boy into her house, whereupon:

She pinned a napkin o'er his face

And pinned it with gold pin

Then called for a vessel of gold

To catch his heart blood in,

In, in,

To catch his heart blood in.

• • •

By the fourteenth century the ritual murder charge had become associated with the Jewish holiday of Passover, attesting to the antisemitism which the Jews' adherence to their laws, as well as to their understanding of God, aroused among Christians. Christians accused Jews of using Christian blood in their unleavened bread (matzoh) and in their wine. In Savoy, in 1329, Christians claimed that the Jews "compound out of the entrails of murdered Christian children a salve of food called aharance (haroseth), which they eat every Passover in place of a sacrifice; they prepare this food at least every sixth year because they believe they are saved thereby.

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In the 1930s the Nazis renewed the libel. The entire May 1, 1934, issue of the Nazi newspaper



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**De: *Sturmer*** was devoted to Jewish ritual murder, and the regular weekly edition of the paper routinely carried illustrations of rabbis sucking the blood of German children.

In the 1960s and the 1970s the blood libel was spread by the leading financial figure in the Arab world, the late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. On a number of occasions Faisal informed newspaper interviewers that the Jews annually celebrated Passover by murdering a non-Jew and consuming his blood.

As a postscript to this discussion of the ritual murder charge, two ironic points are worthy of note. First, the blood libel was directed against the first nation in history to outlaw human sacrifice (Genesis 22, Deuteronomy 18:10) and the only nation in the ancient Near East to prohibit the consumption of any blood (Leviticus 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-14; Deuteronomy 12:15-16; 12:23-25).

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### Plots to Poison Christians

"If a king had a Jewish physician," notes James Parkes, "and did not actually perish on the battlefield, cloven in two by the battle-axe of the enemy, there is nothing surprising in his unfortunate doctor being accused of poisoning him." Parkes cites several instances of Jewish royal physicians being executed after a king's death.

In actuality almost every medieval Jewish doctor was endangered. In 1161, in Bohemia, eighty-six Jews were burned as punishment for an alleged plot of Jewish physicians to poison the populace. Such accusations were endorsed by leading intellectual circles in European society. In 1610, the medical faculty of the University of Vienna declared that Jewish physicians were bound

by Jewish law to kill every tenth Christian through the use of drugs.

Martin Luther said that "if they (the Jews) could kill us all, they would gladly do so, aye, and often do it, especially those who profess to be physicians. They know all that is known about medicine in Germany; they can give poison to a man of which he will die in an hour; or in ten or twenty years; they thoroughly understand this art."

The libels that the Jews were plotting to poison the Christian world had particularly tragic results during the Black Death of 1348-49. This plague, which killed about one-third of Europe's population, was blamed on the Jews despite the fact that the plague also killed Jews. A Christian physician, Konrad of Regensburg, in his *Buch der Natur*, was one of the few Christians to recognize the irrationality of blaming the Jew: "But I know that there were more Jews in Vienna than in any other German city familiar to me, and so many of them died of the plague that they were obliged to enlarge their cemetery. To have brought this on themselves would have been folly on their part." But the doctor's reasoning had no impact.

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Antisemitic libels die hard. In 1953, Joseph Stalin accused a group of doctors, most of them Jews, of a plot to poison the Communist leadership of the Soviet Union. Stalin died three days before their trial was to begin, but we now know that Stalin intended to use the "doctors' plot" to arouse the Russian public against the Jews, and in the ensuing crisis, exile Russia's Jews to Siberia.

### Desecration of the Host

In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council accepted the doctrine of transubstantiation as official

Church dogma. This dogma asserted that the wafer used at the Mass was miraculously transformed into the body of Jesus. The wafer was to be regarded not as a symbolic representation of Jesus, but as his actual body. . . .

Christian belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation led to the torture and murder of thousands of Jews. Since Jesus is brought to life through the wafer, would not the Jews who had once crucified him wish to torture and kill him again? In 1243, only twenty-eight years after the Fourth Lateran Council, the first accusation of "host desecration" occurred in Berlitz, near Berlin. The city's entire Jewish community was burned alive for allegedly torturing a wafer. Charges of "host desecration" spread throughout Europe. In Prague, in 1389, the Jewish community was collectively accused of attacking a monk carrying a wafer. Large mobs of Christians surrounded the Jewish neighborhood and offered the Jews the choice of baptism or death. Refusing to be baptized, three thousand Jews were murdered. In Berlin, in 1510, twenty-six Jews were burned and two beheaded for reportedly "desecrating the host." A charge of host desecration was reported as late as 1836 in Romania.

The "host desecration" libel is among the clearest examples of the Christian perception of the Jews as devils. Clearly, no one, not even a Jew, tortures cookies. If a person does torture one, it could mean only one thing: he, too, recognizes that it is the body of Jesus, and wishes to make him suffer. Who but the people of the Devil recognize the divinity of Jesus but wish to destroy him?

### CHRISTIAN ROOTS OF THE HOLOCAUST

Sixteen hundred years of such hatred of Jews culminated in the Holocaust. Christianity did not create the Holocaust; indeed Nazism was anti-



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Christian, but it made it possible. Without Christian antisemitism, the Holocaust would have been inconceivable.

Nazi antisemitism differed from Christian antisemitism, however, in at least two important ways. It did not allow the Jews the choice of conversion or death, as medieval Christian antisemitism had, but only death. And it called for the murder of all Jews, rather than, as the medieval Christian world had called for, the suffering of all Jews and the random murders of many. In virtually every other way, Nazism depended upon Christian antisemitic ideas, libels, policies, and legislation.

Hitler and the Nazis found in medieval Catholic anti-Jewish legislation a model for their own, and they read and reprinted Martin Luther's virulently antisemitic writings. It is instructive that the Holocaust was unleashed by the only major country in Europe having approximately equal numbers of Catholic and Protestants. Both traditions were saturated with Jew-hatred.

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## THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

Matthew 27:24-25

"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it.  
"Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us and our children."

<sup>14</sup>Taken from: *The Holy Bible*, King James Version, *Matthew* 27:24-25.

## VATICAN II'S DECLARATION ON THE CHURCH'S RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS, OCT. 28, 1965

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (cf. John 19, 6); still, what happened in his passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new People of God, the Jews should not be represented as rejected by God or accursed, as if this followed from Holy Scripture....

The Church, moreover, rejects every persecution against any person. For this reason and for the sake of the patrimony she shares with the Jews, the Church decries hatreds, persecutions and manifestations of anti-Semitism directed against Jews at any time and by anyone....

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people insofar as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned....

<sup>15</sup>Taken from: *The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate)*; AAS 58(1966), pp. 740-744.

## MARTIN LUTHER AND THE JEWS

Raul Hilberg

... A Christian is commanded to choose good and to reject evil. The greater his destructive task, therefore, the more potent are the moral obstacles in his way. These obstacles must be removed—the internal conflict must somehow be resolved. One of the principal means through which the perpetrator will attempt to clear his conscience is by clothing his victim in a mantle of

<sup>16</sup>Taken from: Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: New View Points, 1973), pp. 8-9. Copyright (c) 1961 by Raul Hilberg. Used by permission of the author and his agents, Raines and Raines.

evil, by portraying the victim as an object that must be destroyed.

The picture of the Jew which we encounter in Nazi propaganda and Nazi correspondence had been drawn several hundred years before. Martin Luther had already sketched the main outlines of that portrait, and the Nazis, in their time, had little to add to it. We shall look here at a few excerpts from Luther's book *About the Jews and Their Lies*. In doing so, let it be stressed that Luther's ideas were shared by others in his century, and that the mode of his expression was the style of his times. His work is cited here only because he was a towering figure in the development of German thought, and the writing of such a man is not to be forgotten in the unearthing of so crucial a conceptualization as this. Luther's treatise about the Jews was addressed to the public directly, and, in that pouring recital, sentences descended upon the audience in a veritable cascade. Thus the passage:

Herewith you can readily see how they understand and obey the fifth commandment of God, namely, that they are thirsty bloodhounds and murderers of all Christendom, with full intent, now for more than fourteen hundred years, and indeed they were often burned to death upon the accusation that they had poisoned water and wells, stolen children, and torn and hacked them apart, in order to cool their temper secretly with Christian blood.<sup>15</sup>

And:

Now see what a fine, thick, fat lie that is when they complain that they are held captive by us. It is more than fourteen hundred years since Jerusalem was destroyed, and at this time it is almost three hundred years since we Christians have been tortured and persecuted by the Jews all over the world (as pointed out above), so that we might well

<sup>15</sup>Luther, *Von den Juden*, p. diiii3.



## Handout A-3 (cont.)

complain that they had now captured us and killed us—which is the open truth. Moreover, we do not know to this day which devil has brought them here into our country; we did not look for them in Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup>

Even now no one held them here, Luther continued. They might go whenever they wanted to. For they were a heavy burden, "like a plague, pestilence, pure misfortune in our country." They had been driven from France, "an especially fine nest," and the "dear Emperor Charles" drove them from Spain, "the best nest of all." And this year, they were expelled from the entire Bohemian town, including Prague, "also a very fine nest"—likewise from Regensburg, Magdeburg, and other towns.<sup>17</sup>

Is this called captivity, if one is not welcomed in land or house? Yes, they hold us Christians captive in our country. They let us work in the sweat of our noses, to earn money and property for them, while they sit behind the oven, lazy, let off gas, bake pears, eat, drink, live softly and well from our wealth. They have captured us and our goods through their accursed usury; mock us and spit on us, because we work and permit them to be lazy squires who own us and our realm; they are therefore our lords, we their servants with our own wealth, sweat, and work. They curse our Lord, to reward us and to thank us. Should not the devil laugh and dance, if he can have such paradise among us Christians, that he may devour through the Jews—his holy ones—that which is ours, and stuff our mouths and noses as reward, mocking and cursing God and man for good measure.

They could not have had in Jerusalem under David and Solomon such fine days on their own estate as they have now on ours which they rob and steal daily. But still they

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. diii3, diii4.  
<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. diii4, e.

complain that we hold them captive. Yes, we have and hold them in captivity, just as I have captured my calculus, my blood heaviness, and all other maladies . . .<sup>18</sup>

What have the Christians done, asks Luther, to deserve such a fate? "We do not call their women whores, do not curse them, do not steal and dismember their children, do not poison their water. We do not thirst after their blood." It was not otherwise than Moses had said, "God had struck them with frenzy, blindness, and raging heart." This is Luther's picture of the Jews.

## THE INTERACTING CAUSES OF ANTI-SEMITISM

George Eaton Simpson  
and J. Milton Yinger

To get a more unified picture of the complicated spiral of forces that have created and support anti-Semitism, it might be well to draw together, in summary, the many factors we have traced above. Some of these factors have already been discussed, and so will only be listed here; others that have been disregarded until now will need fuller treatment. It is especially important to keep in mind that these forces are interactive, mutually reinforcing, and to an important degree self-perpetuating. Once a group has been set apart as a target for hostility, it is chosen more readily for that role the next time, because tradition suggests it, guilt feelings demand it, and perhaps the responses of the minority group, having differentiated the group more sharply, encourage it. These are among the interactive forces:

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. e2.  
<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. eii.

Taken from: George Eaton Simpson and J. Milton Yinger. *Racial and Cultural Minorities: An Analysis of Prejudice and Discrimination* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), pp. 338-342. Reprinted by permission by the authors.

1. In the pre-Christian era, the Jewish people, living astride important trade routes and in a strategically vital area of the ancient world, were caught up in conflict with many nations. The conflicts were so continuous that traditions of antipathy were given root. They helped to develop a strong Jewish ethnocentrism which at the same time reinforced the antipathy.

2. With the domination of Europe by the Christian Church, Jews stood out as the only large minority religious group at a time when religious symbols were of enormous importance. The conflict between Christianity and Judaism was more than usually sharp because of the ambivalent relationship between the two—the Jews denied Christ, yet he was a Jew.

3. By the fifth century, Jews had been deprived of their citizenship. This action may have begun as religious intolerance, but it led to many social and economic consequences. Jews had no role in the gradual development of the nation-state system that was to predominate in Europe; they had no legal rights or powers until the end of the eighteenth century. Thus their differentiation from the rest of the "body politic" was increased.

4. Having no legal rights in the medieval world, Jews were permitted to reside in the cities only at the pleasure of the princes. The princes used them as revenue officers and "royal usurers." The royal treasuries seemed always to be empty, so Jews were continually forced to demand payment from the unwilling citizenry. While being drawn into these "banking" activities, Jews were, oppositely, driven from many other occupations, forbidden to own land, and excluded from the artisan guilds. Thus their economic differentiation increased.

5. The rapid growth of cities and the development of commerce from the tenth century on encouraged more and more Christians to come into the formerly marginal occupations associated



## HANDOUT A-3 (cont.)

with trade. They used their advantages as citizens and members of the dominant religion to fight their Jewish competitors, even succeeding in driving them out of most of the nations and cities of western Europe.

6. In eastern Europe, to which most of the Jews fled, they were still barred from citizenship, and the violent attacks which they had experienced at least since the days of the Crusades were repeated. This treatment kept in motion the forces of anti-Semitism.

7. Inevitably the lack of citizenship, economic discrimination, and personal violence to which the Jews were subjected intensified their cohesiveness as a cultural-religious group. Their ethnocentrism was maintained. The Jewish community seemed to be their only protection against the hostilities they continuously experienced. They were bicultural and binational; they could scarcely give full allegiance to the nation or culture in which they resided because of the interaction between the discrimination against them and their own ethnocentrism. They were blocked from the full participation which would have led in time to assimilation in the societies where they lived, and then were accused of being different. They could see no advantage in deserting a rich cultural heritage for a precarious position in the dominant society. Just how precarious that position might be has been shown again by the destruction of German Jewry, one of the most "assimilated" groups in the world. Biculturality has been an important part of the vicious circle that has kept anti-Semitism alive. Being different, Jews were more easily selected for hostile treatment; they were forced back upon their own group and its traditions, thus maintaining its differences. In earlier days, this vicious circle revolved mainly around religious symbols. Only

with the decline of feudalism and the rise of nations, often with relatively distinct cultures, did the position of Jews as "foreigners" become vital. Having evolved painfully into unified nations, the European countries found the Jewish aliens (whom they themselves had kept alien and had prevented from participating in their evolution into statehood) in their midst. It is doubtless significant that there is a high (but not perfect) correlation between the areas where independent statehood was achieved with great difficulty and the areas where anti-Semitism has been most prevalent. Compare England and France with Germany and Poland. There is also a social psychological aspect to the emphasis on nationalism. As Parsons says:

It is a striking fact that the extreme kind of nationalistic sentiment is often found in groups where frustration of the sort described above is likely to be most severe; as for instance, in the lower middle class. The pattern of sentiments seems to be somewhat as follows: "I may not be a successful person, able to live in luxury the way others do; but there is one thing you can't deny I am just as much an American (or German or Englishman) as anybody." Part of the intensity of national sentiment may undoubtedly be interpreted as "compensation" for frustration elsewhere. National identification allows the individual to participate in the glory of the achievements of his nation and relieves him of the blame for lack of personal achievements. Patriotism is very much of a social and economic leveler, and a very appropriate way in which to appease one's own uneasy conscience (usually on an unconscious level) and to "run down" the superior achievements or good fortune of others. The fact that the Jews form a suitable symbol in both these contexts is important in understanding the concentration of aggression on them. In an era when nationalism has loomed large, Jews have been si-

multaneously more provincial (with stanch loyalty to the Jewish community) and more international (with a sense of identification with the Jewish culture in every part of the world and frequently with friends and relatives residing in many different lands).

8. With anti-Semitism established by the factors listed above, it became fixed in tradition and passed on to each new generation in the socialization process. Once used, a pattern of prejudice is more likely to be used again than is a new pattern, for the old has acquired reinforcements. It has the sanction of tradition; it has helped to create some of the very differences by which it was at first justified; and the minority group has absorbed some of the projections of the dominant group—to admit that the prejudice was not "justified" would then require of the dominant group that they reexamine the projected evils which they have thrust from themselves. Since this is too painful an experience for most individuals, they maintain the old prejudice. Many Germans today have strong unconscious guilt feelings about the anti-Semitism of the Nazi regime, whether they participated in it or simply failed to oppose it. Those very guilt feelings may well increase their anti-Semitism. And in some individuals at least, the stronger the guilt, the stronger must be the prejudice to try to allay the tensions. Here is another important factor in the vicious circle of anti-Semitism.

9. Part of the tradition of prejudice is the stream of stories, jokes, and stereotypes that carries the culturally established attitude on to the next generation. Millions of people who have scarcely ever seen a Jew "know" why a joke is funny when it shows a "typical" Jewish trait or has a Jew acting in a way completely unfitting to the stereotype. By laughing at the joke we share a bond of common "knowledge" with our associates, we get a feeling of superiority, and by ac-



## HANDOUT A-3 (cont.)

knowledging its humor we get a twisted kind of proof that our original attitude was correct. Literature contains a number of stereotyped and hostile pictures of Jews, beginning with the medieval miracle plays and the later morality plays indicating their connection with the popular forms of medieval Christian teachings. Chaucer's "Priores' Tale," Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* have helped to reinforce attitudes toward the Jews. Of themselves, they would not create a prejudice; it is the reader, more than the writer, who makes them reinforce a belief already established. In a different context they would have a wholly different effect.

It mattered little in the ultimate anti-Semitic effects that Shakespeare's Shylock is presented with great imaginative penetration. The name became in time the popular designation for all Jews, and the subtler humanity of the great dramatist's character remained unknown to the vast majority who have since its creation used the name Shylock as synonymous with Jew. . . . Most would agree that it is invidious and incompetent criticism which stresses anti-Semitism as such in creative literature like Shakespeare's. As Dickens once said in reply to Jewish criticisms of his character Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, "All the rest of the wicked dramatis personae are Christians." Even great literature read from the perspective of an already established prejudice, can be viewed as stereotypes.

10. Anti-Semitism has been sustained to some degree by the wide dispersion of Jews around the world. When a non-Jew moved from one nation to another, his pattern of prejudice was not broken, for in the new land he was likely to find Jews. International contacts did not challenge the

traditional prejudice against the Jews. " . . . Because he is a continuous minority in all the communicating lands of the Western world, the apprehensions regarding him as a minority were transferable, interchangeable, and even cumulative to a degree."

11. Some of the interactive forces that sustain anti-Semitism are particularly prominent in the modern world. They have given it a force and a tenacity unmatched even by medieval pogroms. Freud (and many others following him) contended that anti-Semitism is in part simply a way of attacking Christianity itself. The anti-Semitic person is protesting against Christ as a symbol of brotherhood, peace, and egalitarianism; he is protesting against the demands on his behavior that Christian teachings make. A song of the Hitler Youth declared: "Pope and Rabbi shall be gone. We want to be pagans once again. No more creeping to churches" and another said: "We are the joyous Hitler Youth. We do not need any Christian virtue. Our leader, Adolf Hitler, is our Saviour." "No more creeping to churches" an important phrase of self-revelation. Anti-Semitism thrives among those who feel Christianity as repression. They attack Jews not as Christ killers but as Christ givers. This hostility may break into the open, as in the case of the Hitler Youth, or it may be unconscious displacement as with the more traditionally religious Americans. The unconscious hostility that the latter feel toward Christian authority over their lives is displaced onto the Jews. Maurice Samuel insists that this is the cause of anti-Semitism. He draws a sharp line between anti-Jewish sentiment and anti-Semitic hallucination: "Anti-Jewish sentiment (a dislike of Jews based on contact, direct or indirect, with some Jews) is in fact the ordinary variety of racial, religious, and economic bitterness, overflowing in ordinary human abuse. Anti-Semitic hallucination is a unique phenomenon (the word

unique must be taken quite literally here) in modern group relations."

That anti-Semitism, like all other prejudices, has some unique aspects, and that the desire to attack Christianity obliquely is one of them seem to be highly probable. (We do not need to share Samuel's enthusiasm for this as the only explanation, or assume, as he does, that those who disagree with him are obstinate, naive, or themselves anti-Semitic.) This aspect of anti-Semitism has become increasingly important in recent years, particularly in Nazism, which was thoroughly antithetical to Christianity as well as to Judaism, but also in many other movements and in many individuals.

12. Having discussed the personality factors in prejudice at length above, we need only mention them here to bring them into the list of interacting forces. The loss of an integrating system of values, the "freedom" that is felt as loneliness and confusion, the alienation from satisfaction with one's work, the gap between achievement and one's desires—these and the other aspects of modern society that have contributed to insecurity have made a great many of us particularly susceptible to prejudice.

13. Akin to the theory that modern anti-Semitism rests in part on a reaction against Christianity is the theory that it is a disguised attack on liberal democracy as it has developed since the eighteenth century. This source of opposition to Jews is often a consciously chosen weapon in political-economic conflict. Anti-Semitism can obscure basic problems, can divert the hostility of the masses, can cloak an attack on democracy as "necessary" for protection against the dangerous Jews. "The history of anti-Semitism, in both its classical and modern form, shows that it is profoundly symptomatic of political, economic, and institutional change." In periods of rapid change, with their attendant frustrations, a nation with a



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tradition of anti-Semitism can be led away from democracy and liberalism by the manipulation of hostility toward the Jews.

14. One of the forces involved in modern anti-Semitism implied above is explicit propaganda and the work of organized groups. Propaganda and "hate groups" are a "cause" of anti-Semitism only when there is already a favorable attitude toward their message. In such a situation they can increase and intensify the prejudice. Propaganda to whip up hatred of the Jews was carried on systematically by the Nazis and has been used extensively by "hate groups" in the United States.

15. Modern anti-Semitism has been sustained not only by the attacks on Christianity and democracy that characterize some aspects of our society, but also by the increasing importance of commerce and industry. The Jews, having been forced into the cities and into commercial occupations by the process that we have discussed, naturally took an important part (although one that is often exaggerated by anti-Semites) in the development of the modern economy. They became competitors of the increasingly powerful middle class, while at the same time representing to

those who were suffering from the new order the essence of the society they opposed. This later group included the old ruling class, who often identified Jews as the key factors in the new economy; and it included the masses of people in many situations. As trade developed in eastern Europe, Jews in high proportion took over the "marginal" job of buying and selling cattle. "Since a cattle dealer is never a popular figure in agricultural communities, the only living contact between the precapitalist peasant masses of central and eastern Europe and the market economy of modern industrial society was the Jew."

16. Oppositely, Jews have been used as symbols of communism — sometimes, as in the case of Hitler, by the same person who identifies them as the epitome of capitalism. Jews have, of course, participated in the growth of communism and other left-wing developments in the last century. It scarcely matters, for a theory of anti-Semitism, whether they have furnished more or less than a proportionate number of left-wingers, for prejudice can create the necessary observation.

17. Jews have been important in the rise of the trade-union movement. Since trade unionism has been able to get increasing rewards for work-

ers in all industrialized western nations, employers, and others have often fought it vigorously. Those who already had a prejudice against Jews could easily convince themselves that unionism was a Jewish product.

Modern urban industrial society is thus not only prejudice-prone, but peculiarly prone to anti-Jewish prejudice. The Jews, who occupy places on almost every status level of society, are more apt scapegoats for more diverse groups than is a minority that is concentrated primarily in lower status levels. Jews are importantly involved in most of the sharply conflicting developments of modern life. The prejudices of various groups are thus mutually reinforced. The long history of violence against Jews has created such deep-going guilt feelings that many people dare not admit — their ego involvement being so intricately related to the question — that their hostility to Jews is a categorical prejudice. Thus economic conflict, personal insecurity, traditional stereotypes, cultural disorganization, and propagandistic distortion have come together to create and sustain the blinding prejudice of anti-Semitism.



## HANDOUT A-4

### ANTI-SEMITISM IN LITERATURE

"This worship, however introduced, is upheld by its antiquity; all their other customs, which are at once perverse and disgusting, owe their strength to their badness. The most degraded out of other races, scorning their national beliefs, brought to them their contributions and presents. This augmented the wealth of the Jews, as also did the fact that among themselves they are inflexibly honest and ever ready to show compassion, though they regard the rest of mankind with all the hatred of enemies."

Source: Tacitus, *THE HISTORIES*,  
Book V. (circa 55-120 A.D.)

"In Asia, in a city rich and great  
There was a Jewry set amidst the town,  
Established by a rich lord of the state  
For usury and gain of ill renown,  
Hateful to Christ and those who are His own,  
And through that street a man might ride or  
wend,  
For it was free and open at each end."

Source: Geoffrey Chaucer, *THE CANTERBURY  
TALES*, "The Prioress's Tale" (1386-1400)

Shylock. (Aside) "How like a fawning publican  
he looks!

I hate him for he is a Christian,  
But more for that in low simplicity  
He lends out money gratis and brings down  
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.  
If I can catch him once upon the hip,  
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.  
He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,  
Even there where merchants most do congregate,  
On me, my bargains, and my well won thrif,  
Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe,  
If I give him!"

Source: William Shakespeare, *THE MERCHANT  
OF VENICE*, Act I. (1596)

"What is the object of the Jew's worship in this  
world? Usury. What is his worldly God? Money.  
Very well then; emancipation from usury and  
money, that is from practical real Judaism, would

constitute the emancipation of our time....The  
social emancipation of Jewry is the emancipation  
of society from Jewry."

Source: Karl Marx (1818-1883) quoted in  
Edward Flannery, *The Anguish of the  
Jews*, p. 167.